

## Quality Assurance Plan

### e-Child Care Project

*Leveraging today's advanced technologies to maintain strong accountability for Washington state's child care program.*

*Prepared by the e-Child Care Project Team*

**October 21, 2003**

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# Background

## e-Child Care Project Opportunity

DSHS Economic Services Administration's Division of Child Care and Early Learning (DCCEL) and Information Technology Division (ITD) will conduct a Request for Information (RFI), Feasibility Study, Investment Plan, and Request for Proposal (RFP) to acquire components that will improve WCCC process efficiency and the customer service experience by evaluating, identifying, selecting, and finally implementing new technologies known as e-Child Care.

The DCCEL, through the e-Child Care Project, is focusing on how interaction between the Working Connection Child Care (WCCC) program<sup>1</sup> authorizing workers, child care clients, providers, and licensors can be streamlined to better meet WCCC service delivery and customer satisfaction goals.

The project will improve the delivery of the WCCC program by implementing new public access, client record management, provider record management, and payment processes.

In November of 2000, Sterling Associates recommended that DSHS evaluate the potential long-term benefits associated with implementation of Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) technology, web-based information tracking systems and/or the use of other alternative avenues.<sup>2</sup>

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup>The Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) program provides child care subsidies for families, whose incomes are at or below 200% of the federal poverty level, whose adults are working, looking for work, or enrolled in an approved training program while working.

<sup>2</sup> The e-Child Care Project's opportunity to streamline and improve the coordination of the WCCC program is addressed to Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) in publications as specific recommendations referenced as follows:

*Recommendations 2 and 7 detailed in the DSHS, Working Connection Child Care Program Review, (page 54 and page 59.) Sterling Associates. Olympia. November 2000, which in turn is referenced in the following publication:*

*Recommendation 4 in the OFM, Child Care and Early Learning Organization Study, (page 49) December 2000.*

The recommendations are outlined in the *e-Child Care Project Plan*, as well as included in this QA Plan as *Appendix one: Summary of recommendations*.

## e-Child Care Project approach

The e-Child Care project will be organized into small acquisition projects that are each chartered and managed distinctly. This approach will keep the project team focused on each phase of the project and allow for tighter schedule management and resource leveraging.

The four main projects will be:

1. Request for Information (RFI),
2. Feasibility Study,
3. Investment Plan, and
4. Request For Proposal (RFP).

The sponsors will review and approve each project deliverable as the acquisition progresses.

The e-Child Care Project expects to be completed with the RFI, Feasibility Study, and Investment Plan by April 30, 2004.

The project expects to receive Information Service Board (ISB) approval to proceed with the RFP process by May 1, 2004.

A separate project plan will be established for the implementation of the system acquired through the RFP.

Refer to the *e-Child Care Project Plan* for a more descriptive narrative of the project plan, schedule and major milestones.

# Quality assurance plan

## Purpose

The Quality Assurance (QA) plan will work to provide timely, independent and objective review of the e-Child Care project's progress and difficulties.

The purpose of this QA plan is to focus on early identification of potential issues for the e-Child Care Project.

Ultimately, this QA process will identify areas of concern and recommend solutions before the concerns become serious problems that negatively impact the e-Child Care project.

## Assumptions, risks, obstacles

The benefits of e-Child Care cannot be attained without effort and addressing the unique challenges of working with a group of diverse stakeholders.

Some of the major obstacles to be overcome to ensure the success of this project include:

- Coordinating and prioritizing the needs of diverse stakeholders (scope management).
- Moving quickly to meet the proposed timelines, yet ensuring that the system is fully operational, meets user needs, and does not introduce additional work requirements of participants.
- Ensuring that the system design provides benefits to all stakeholders to facilitate user acceptance.
- Managing the scope of the project to conform to the available budget.
- Integrating this project with other projects within the participating agencies.
- Ensuring adequate user training and user acceptance of the system.

The single greatest challenge, given the timeline and budget, will be establishing the scope of the new system and ensuring that "scope creep" is effectively managed.

If requirements are effectively identified and prioritized, then it should be possible to design a system that meets user requirements, delivers real benefits, and can be successfully implemented.

## QA requirement

In March of 2003, the ISSD e-Center performed a severity and risk assessment of the e-Child Care Project as part of project inclusion in the DSHS Portfolio.

Severity assessment is rated on four categories: impact on citizens, visibility to the public and Legislature, impact on state operations, and the consequences of doing nothing.

Risk criteria measure the impact of the project on the organization, the effort needed to complete the project, the stability of the proposed technology, and the agency preparedness.

The DSHS ISSD e-Center has rated the project a risk and severity level 3. This means the project will perform with a level of oversight that reports to the Information Services Board (ISB). While this is not problematic, it does cause levels of complexity and additional costs for independent quality assurance.

The ISB requires projects that have assessed with a level three risk and severity assessment to acquire independent quality assurance.

The e-Child Care Project is following the *Responsibilities and Obligations for Quality Assurance* adopted by the Information Services Board (ISB).

ISSD e-Center's risk and severity assessment is attached as *Appendix two: Risk assessment summary*.

The e-child care project summary is attached as *Appendix three: Project summary*.

## Goal

QA will examine the resources, policies, procedures, environment, and structures of the e-Child Care project and facilitate the identification of high-risk areas.

Based on this independent assessment, project issues can be identified early and mitigating actions can be recommended, implemented, and monitored.

## Approach

The core effort of independent QA for the e-Child Care Project will be to identify the major issues facing the project. For each issue, QA will determine one or more specific actions to be taken to reduce the project's risk.

The independent QA consultant will assist the project in deciding how to implement the recommendations, then monitor progress and the effectiveness of the strategy.

This cycle is regularly repeated throughout the life of the project. Over time, as the project remains healthy, the overall project will remain stable, or optimally decrease.

## Scope

The quality assurance component of the e-Child Care Project scope of work will be limited to focusing upon three areas:

1. Develop a quality assurance plan in coordination with the project manager.
2. Conduct a formal risk assessment to identify the major issues facing the project.
3. Monitoring the project to provide early identification of potential issues by reviewing the project's adherence to the state's IT policies on project management, investment standards and feasibility study guidelines and Request For Proposal (RFP) processes then providing ongoing advice, counsel and recommendations to the project team, sponsors and steering committee.

## Success criteria

In order for QA to be considered a successful effort that helped the e-Child Care Project complete its goals and objectives, the QA independent consultant must:

- provide early identification of potential issues.
- provide timely formal communication through a variety of methods, including status reports, assessment reports, and presentations.
- foster open communication among all project participants.

## Methodologies and standards

**Communication** Frequent interaction with the project team and stakeholders is necessary to facilitate the timely exchange of information and foster open communication among all project participants.

**Relationships** QA consultants will provide ongoing advice, counsel and recommendations to the project team, steering committee and sponsors. The first loyalty of QA is to the business purposed being addressed through the IT project – not individual stakeholders, preferred solutions, methodologies or other interests. (*Responsibilities and Obligations for Quality Assurance.*)

**Purpose** QA serves the wider public interest of assuring accountability for taxpayer funded IT projects. To that end, QA provides a common source of reliable information to those charged with the oversight of projects. The e-Child Care Project has agreed to adopt the principles of *Responsibilities and Obligations for Quality Assurance* and its related policies.

## References

Reference materials that were used in developing this QA plan are the following:

- The Project Management Framework hosted at the Department of Information Services (DIS).  
Online reference:  
<http://www.wa.gov/dis/pmframework/index.htm>
- The DIS *Quality Assurance Template*.  
Online reference:  
<http://www.wa.gov/dis/pmframework/planning/qualityassurance.htm>
- The DIS document *Responsibilities and Obligations for Quality Assurance, July 1998*.  
Online reference:  
<http://www.wa.gov/dis/portfolio/responsibilitiesandobligationsforqualityassurance.htm>
- The MTG *Quality Assurance/Risk Assessment Methodology*. Copies available by contacting the e-Child Care Project Manager.
- The *e-Child Care Project Plan*. Copies available by contacting the e-Child Care Project Manager.
- The *e-Child Care Communication Plan*. Copies available by contracting the e-Child Care Project Manager.

## Quality checkpoints

### Formal risk assessment

Together with the project, the QA will conduct a form risk assessment to identify the major issues facing the project. Based on the results of this assessment, QA and the project will identify the major issues facing the project.

For each issue, QA and the project will determine one or more specific actions to be taken to reduce project risk. QA assists the project in deciding how to implement the recommendations, then monitor progress and the effectiveness of the strategy. This QA cycle is regularly repeated throughout the life of the project.

### QA project review

QA will commence reviewing the e-Child Care work plans and schedules (are we meeting our dates?)

QA will work closely with project executives and stakeholders to clearly validate:

- Scope, goals, and objectives of the project to be monitored during the QA/RA effort.
- Internal or external constraints that affect the project or QA effort.
- Project stakeholders (Contractors, project team, governance bodies, business and technical and operational management groups) and ensuring access to them.
- The current status and stage of the project.
- The nature, depth, deliverables, and timing of desired QA services.
- Any modifications and adaptations of the QA plan that are needed and appropriate to the QA statement of work.

### Adherence to IT policy

QA will monitor the project and its issue management for adherence to the state's IT policies on project management, investment standards and feasibility study guidelines.

### Oversight relationship management

QA will continually be reporting how the project is progressing with the various project sponsors, steering committees and external oversight groups.

### QA milestones

Activity	Target completion
Quality Assurance Plan	February 13, 2004
Formal risk assessment	February 27, 2004
QA Project Monitoring	Ongoing
• Issue reporting	Steering committee
• Issue reporting	Sponsors
• Issue reporting	Project management

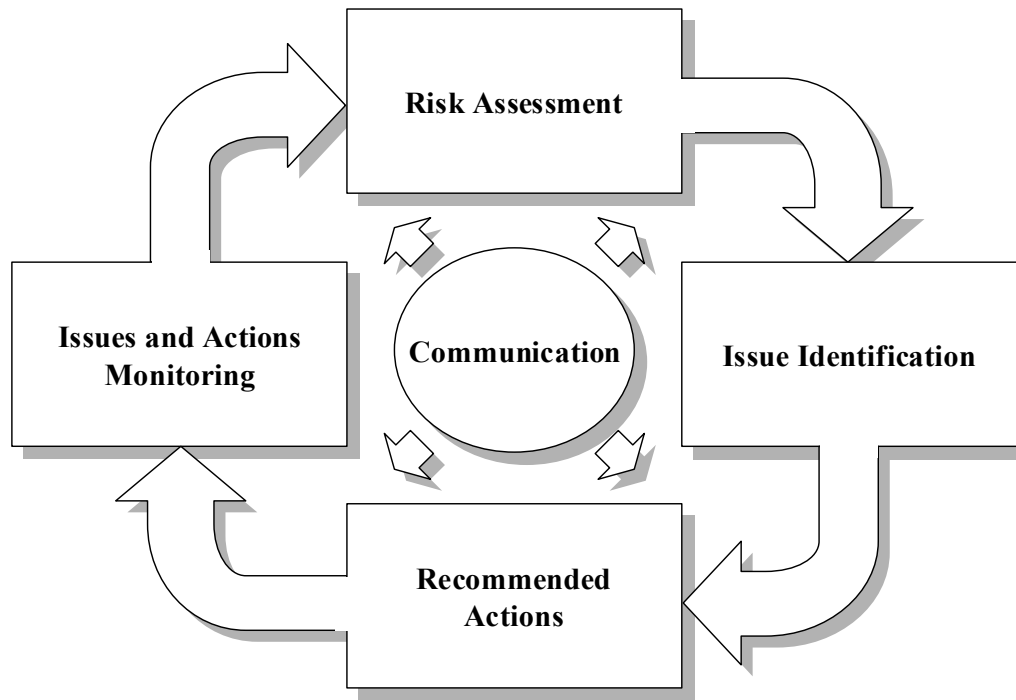
### QA commitment

The department will be developing an RFP for the services of external QA professionals to be hired to act as a common source of reliable information to those charged with the oversight of the project. These independent QA professionals will help ensure the project is mitigating risks, following proper IT policy, and performing on target and on schedule.

The department's commitment to responsible QA reporting is demonstrated by the procurement of external QA consultants. A statement of work is included as: *Appendix four: e-Child Care quality assurance statement of work.*

## Quality assessment and reviews

The following diagram illustrates the overall flow of QA and risk assessment activities for the e-Child Care project.



For each issue, QA and the project will determine one or more specific actions to be taken to reduce project risk. QA assists the project in deciding how to implement the recommendations, then monitor progress and the effectiveness of the strategy. This QA cycle is regularly repeated throughout the life of the project.

The e-Child Care QA communication approach is built on the following five components:

1. *Regular Project Team Meetings* – In order to stay involved with the project at all times, QA will participate in regular team meetings. These meetings are critical to maintaining a close working relationship with project staff and to identifying and helping to resolve new issues.
2. *Regular Project Management Meetings* – Attending regular meetings with the e-Child Care project management review is also important to maintaining a close working relationship and to identifying and resolving issues. This forum can provide insights that may not be available in a full project team meeting.
3. *Formal Reports* – On a routine basis established QA will formally document QA findings and recommendations.
4. *Internal Reporting* – QA will meet with the project manager, sponsors, and DSHS management such as the e-Child Care and ESA steering committees to present the findings and recommendations in all the formal reports. These meetings are the primary vehicle for keeping management informed of issues.
5. *External Reporting* – In addition to internal reporting to project management, QA will be prepared to provide status reports to defined external oversight entities. QA will be available to present an independent overview of the project status to legislative oversight committees or senior management, as desired by the project sponsors.

## Appendix one: Summary of recommendations

The e-Child Care Project's opportunity to streamline and improve the coordination of the WCCC program is addressed to DSHS in publications as specific recommendations referenced as follows:

*Recommendations 2 and 7 detailed in the DSHS, Working Connection Child Care Program Review, (page 54 and page 59.) Sterling Associates. Olympia. November 2000, which in-turn is referenced in the following publication:*

*Recommendation 4 in the OFM, Child Care and Early Learning Organization Study, (page 49) December 2000.*

**Recommendation 2:** DSHS should evaluate the potential long-term benefits associated with implementation of Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) technology, web-based information tracking systems and/or the use of other alternative avenues such as e-mail.

*Benefits:* Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) technology would allow providers to submit invoices for child care through the use of technology similar to the way debit cards work. Because the information about hours of child care is collected and transmitted to DSHS electronically rather than by traditional mail, and payments are made to providers via electronic transfer, the waiting time for payments is virtually eliminated. Not only is speed of payment increased, but also problems related to authorization can be detected and resolved much more quickly.

A web-based system of information tracking that allows parents and providers to find out what stage a WCCC parent's paperwork is at would be a tremendous benefit to providers. Such a system would allow a provider to quickly and easily determine whether a child has been authorized for WCCC, without having to talk to the Authorizing Worker (AW) personally. This eliminates the frustrating and time-wasting cycle (phone tag) between providers and AWs. As a result, AWs would have more time available to devote to ensuring that client eligibility and authorization information is up-to-date. Another option mentioned by providers during the focus groups is to set up a toll free number that providers and parent could access that would give them up-to-date information on authorization status, etc.

Even the small step of encouraging the appropriate use of e-mail could potentially have significant benefits to the overall program efficiency. E-mail is a very effective tool for getting routine, but critical, questions or issues resolved without having to talk person-to-person. Of course, if the use of e-mail is encouraged, it must be accompanied by a clear directive that responses must be made within a reasonable period of time. This allows both the provider and the AW to address the issue of a convenient time that fits within their own schedule.

**Recommendation 7:** DSHS should explore ways to reduce the paperwork burden by using information from other programs. For example, it may be possible to collect routine income and other employed related information from ACES and download it into WCAP eligibility information rather than requiring the parent to submit the same information to both programs.

*Benefits:* Pooling client information, while maintaining client confidentiality, would reduce the paperwork burden both for the Authorizing Worker and the parent, and would hasten the authorization and reauthorization processes.



## Appendix two: Risk assessment summary

<b>Project Title</b>		e-Child Care Project
<b>Project Manager/Contact</b>		Linda Jo Demery
<b>e-Center Contact</b>		David Brummel
<b>Date of Assessment</b>		3/28/03
<b>PROJECT OVERVIEW</b>		The e-Child Care Project will improve the delivery of the child care program by implementing new case file management, billing payment and public access systems.
<b>SEVERITY</b>	Impact on Clients	High. It is anticipated that the public and providers will have direct access to many parts of the new system. Billing payment systems are involved.
	Visibility	High. The systems that will be part of the project will process sensitive client information. The project will be visible to the public, providers, the legislature and child care advocacy groups who all have stakes.
	Impact on State Operations	Medium. It is not anticipated this project will require any new mainframes or networks but it will impact the following existing systems: WCAP, Barcode, ACES, JAS, SSPS, EMIS, FRS and HIPS. Multiple divisions within ESA will be involved.
	Failure or Nil Consequences	Low. Not proceeding with the project will simply be a loss of opportunity to improve service delivery and efficiency.
	<b>RATING</b>	HIGH
<b>RISK</b>	Functional Impact on Business Processes or Rules	High. Multiple organizations are involved and it is anticipated that solutions will significantly change business processes and replace current systems.
	Development Effort and Resources	High. It is anticipated that the total project will take more than 24 months. Exact cost of the project is not currently known but it is anticipated it will be over delegated authority.
	Technology	Medium. Technological solutions are currently not known but it is possible the project will require technology that is standard and proven but new to DCCEL.
	Capability and Management	Medium. There is strong executive sponsorship and the project has hired a dedicated project manager. The project manager is currently working on an overall project plan and once completed, this risk rating will be re-evaluated.
	<b>RATING</b>	HIGH
<b>OVERALL RATING</b>		LEVEL 3
<b>PROJECT APPROVAL AND OVERSIGHT REQUIREMENTS</b>		DSHS CIO, DIS, and ISB approval is required. Feasibility study is required to be presented to ISB. ISB oversight and external QA are required.
<b>Publish in Agency IT Portfolio</b>		YES



## Appendix three: Project summary

### Project Summary

<b>Project Title</b>	e-Child Care Project
<b>Project Manager/Contact</b>	Linda Jo Demery, e-Child Care Project Manager
<b>Executive Sponsor</b>	Rachael Langen, Director, Division of Child Care and Early Learning Rob St. John, Director, Information Technology Division Mike Masten, Director, Customer Services Division
<b>Description/Purpose</b>	The Division of Child Care and Early Learning (DCCEL), through the e-Child Care Project, is focusing on how interaction among the Working Connection Child Care (WCCC) program authorizing workers, child care clients, providers, and licensors can be streamlined to better meet WCCC service delivery and customer satisfaction goals. The project will improve the delivery of the WCCC program by implementing new public access, client record management, provider record management, and payment processes.
<b>Business Driver/Strategy Supported</b>	<p><b>Business Driver:</b> The e-Child Care Project is chartered to evaluate, identify, select, and implement new subsidy payment technologies, web-based information tracking systems and the use of alternative communication avenues. The impetus to streamline and improve the coordination of the WCCC program stems from specific recommendations in the following publications:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">DSHS, <i>Working Connection Child Care Program Review</i>, Sterling Associates, November 2000, Recommendations 2 and 7 (page 54 and page 59).</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">OFM, <i>Child Care and Early Learning Organization Study</i>, December 2000, Recommendation 4 (page 49).</p> <p><b>Strategy Supported:</b> The e-Child Care Project will ultimately provide long-term benefits using the following strategies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <b>Public Access:</b> Improve communications among DSHS authorizing workers, child care clients, providers, and licensors. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Streamline the application process.</li> <li>b) Ensure timely eligibility decisions.</li> <li>c) Make the child care processes easier to access.</li> <li>d) Improve DSHS, client and provider overall customer satisfaction.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2) <b>Client Record and Provider Record Management:</b> Streamline requirements based upon the needs of authorizing workers, child care clients, providers and licensors. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Interface vital data to complement client record management.</li> <li>b) Track and report children's attendance using an automated approach.</li> </ol> </li> <li>3) <b>Payment Process:</b> Ensure timely payments to providers. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Allow workers to easily change and correct payment data.</li> <li>b) Make payments to providers more frequently.</li> <li>c) Make payments that accurately reflect the child care provided.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

**Appendix four: e-Child Care QA statement of work****Exhibit A****STATEMENT OF WORK**  
**e-Child Care Project Quality Assurance Consultant****PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this contract is to provide ongoing external assessment of the DSHS (referenced as Department herein) e-Child Care Project. The core effort of independent Quality Assurance (QA) for the e-Child Care Project will be to identify the major issues facing the project.

For each issue, QA will determine one or more specific actions to be taken to reduce the project's risk. The independent QA consultant will assist the project in deciding how to implement the recommendations, then monitor progress and the effectiveness of the strategy. This cycle is regularly repeated throughout the life of the project. Over time, as the project remains healthy, the overall project will remain stable, or optimally decrease.

**CONTRACTOR'S OBLIGATIONS:**

The Contractor shall:

1. Be available in Lacey, Washington to the project manager via telephone and email and for scheduled work events, meetings, and conferences with the e-Child Care Project during regular business hours from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm on Monday through Friday.
2. Provide their own personal computers, software, email and communication accommodations.
3. Provide their own travel expenses to and from the Lacey Office location.
4. Utilize their own office locations in order to complete work products outside of scheduled meeting events.

**DELIVERABLES:**

1. Develop a quality assurance plan in coordination with the project manager that includes a schedule of the risk assessment activity and QA checkpoints.
2. Conduct a formal risk assessment to identify the major issues facing the project. Together with the project, the QA will conduct a form risk assessment to identify the major issues facing the project. Based on the results of this assessment, QA and the project will identify the major issues facing the project. For each issue, QA and the project will determine one or more specific actions to be taken to reduce project risk. QA assists the project in deciding how to implement the recommendations, then monitor progress and the effectiveness of the strategy. This QA cycle is regularly repeated throughout the life of the project.
3. Monitoring and reporting no less than twice a month to the project's executive sponsor. Monitoring the project to provide early identification of potential issues by reviewing the project's adherence to the state's IT policies on project management, investment standards and feasibility study guidelines and Request For Proposal (RFP) processes then providing ongoing advice, counsel and recommendations to the project team, sponsors and steering committee. QA will commence reviewing the e-Child Care work plans and schedules (are we meeting our dates?) QA will work closely with project executives and stakeholders to clearly validate:
  - Scope, goals, and objectives of the project to be monitored during the QA/RA effort.
  - Internal or external constraints that affect the project or QA effort.
  - Project stakeholders (Contractors, project team, governance bodies, business and technical and operational management groups) and ensuring access to them.
  - The current status and stage of the project.
  - The nature, depth, deliverables, and timing of desired QA services.
  - Any modifications and adaptations of the QA plan that are needed and appropriate to the QA statement of work.

**COMPENSATION:**

The total maximum consideration for this service shall not exceed \$41,600.00 to cover time and materials for services provided under this contract.

**COSTS: \$41,600.00 (NOT TO EXCEED)**

The project cost is over an eight (8) month period and will be billed as time and materials not to exceed \$41,600.00.

**SCHEDULE:** January 24, 2004 through September 30, 2004